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MARCH AGAINST SEX TRAFFICKING OF CHILDREN NOVEMBER 21

Sending a clear message to traffickers and customers that the selling and buying of children for sex will not be tolerated, Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors Chairman Mark Ridley-Thomas, Compton Mayor Aja Brown, Long Beach Councilmember Steven Neal and more than 200 community members and concerned residents will take part in a march and rally along Long Beach Blvd., **Thursday, November 21 at 6:30 pm.**

The march, which will begin at Palmer Avenue in Compton and end at Carlin Street in Lynwood, will highlight the route often used by “johns” and “pimps” in the buying and selling of young victims—some of whom are as young as 12. These children are sexually exploited by traffickers and adult customers 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Seedy motels and some businesses along the corridor contribute to this activity.

“Many business owners, churches and homeowners in the community turn a blind eye to the activity for numerous reasons stemming from fear of retaliation to outright apathy,” said Chairman Ridley-Thomas. “It is time to call upon elected officials, clergy, businesses leaders and most of all the community to combat and eradicate human sex trafficking on Long Beach Blvd. We are putting the buyers and sellers of sex on notice that we are coming after them. And we are sending the message to the victims that there is help out there.”

Human sex trafficking is a \$32 billion dollar business increasingly run by gangs. The Federal Bureau of Investigation estimates that 100,000 children in the United States are sold for sex each year. In Los Angeles, it is estimated that as many as 3,000 children are trafficked.

The march is only one step in bringing attention, resources and solutions to curb this illegal activity. Los Angeles County Supervisor Don Knabe and Chairman Ridley-Thomas have co-authored several motions, including asking for the establishment of a county-wide protocol for dealing with children that are trafficked for sex so that the departments of Probation, Children and Family Services, Public Social Services, Mental Health, Public Health, Health Services, the District Attorney and the Sheriff's Department work together to help these victims. A draft of this plan is expected by early 2014.

Also, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors called on state legislators to dramatically raise fines and penalties against adults convicted of soliciting and having sex with children. The same motion also called for improved services and treatment for the victims. California Senate Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg and Assemblywoman Holly Mitchell have expressed interest in authoring the legislation.

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